

Homicide in California 1981-2008:

**Measuring the Impact of
Los Angeles and Gangs
On Overall Homicide Patterns**



**Prepared by George Tita, Ph.D. and Allan Abrahamse for the
Governor's Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy**

April 2010

Message from the Director

Since 1981, California has suffered more than 16,000 gang-related homicides – a number that shocks. Homicide is the best documented measure of gang violence. For these reasons, we asked Professor George Tita and Allan Abrahamse to reconsider their previous study, which examined gang homicides from 1981 through 2001, in light of the most recent data (2002 through 2008). They found that, at a state level, the rate of gang killings has decreased since 2002. As always, however, the real story required some drilling down. Over the past five years, the City of Los Angeles has seen a 30 percent drop in gang homicides. In contrast, the rest of the state has experienced a nine percent increase and the counties with the largest increases are located principally in the Central Valley and points north (e.g., Tulare, Fresno, Stanislaus, and Santa Clara Counties). The study confirms what residents in these communities know too well: gangs and gang violence have robustly emerged throughout the state.

The variability among communities afflicted by gang violence – large, medium, small/urban, suburban, and rural – reminds us that the state’s approach to this problem must be sensitive to these differences. In effect, the state must form an individualized partnership with each community that has the will to deploy its resources in a strategic and sustained fashion. That has been the approach of the Governor’s Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy.

This report and the authors’ previous report can be found on our Website: www.calgrip.ca.gov . Professor Tita can be contacted at: Department of Criminology, Law and Society; School of Social Ecology; University of California at Irvine; Irvine, CA 92697; 949/824-4927; gtita@uci.edu . Allan Abrahamse, a mathematician retired from RAND, can be contacted at: 562/430-3981; allan@abrahamse.org .

Paul Seave, Director
Paul.Seave@calema.ca.gov

April 21, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
Overview	1
PART I: Risk of Becoming a Homicide Victim in California, 1981-2008	3
Gang Homicide Trends, 1981-2008	5
SUMMARY	14
PART II: Recent Changes in the Patterns of Gang Homicide.....	14
PART III: A Note of Caution – Are the numbers of gang homicide “correct”?	25
Conclusions and Policy Recommendations.....	27

FIGURES

Figure 1 - Homicides per 100,000 in California, 1960 – 2008.....	1
Figure 2 - Homicide rates by age and gender	4
Figure 3 - Homicide victims per 100,000 population, 1981-2008	6
Figure 4 - Gang killings of males age 18-24 per 100,000 at risk, 1981-2008	7
Figure 5 - Percent of all homicides that are gang killings in Los Angeles County and the rest of California, 1981-2008.....	8
Figure 6 - Number of gang killings in Los Angeles County and in the rest of California contrasted with the expected number on the basis of demography,1981-2008..	9
Figure 7 - Gang killings of Hispanic males age 10-24 in and outside Los Angeles County, 1981-2008.....	10
Figure 8 - Gang killings of African American males age 10-24 in and outside Los Angeles County, 1981-2008.....	13
Figure 9 - Percentage Change in Gang Homicide (1999-2003) to (2004-2008)	15
Figure 10 - Absolute Change in Gang Homicide (1999-2003) to (2004-2008)	16

TABLES

Table 1 - Nine homicide types, 1981-2008	5
Table 2 - Gang homicides of young Hispanic males in and out of Los Angeles County, 1981-2008.....	12
Table 3 - Total Reported Gang Homicides in California, 1999-2008	18

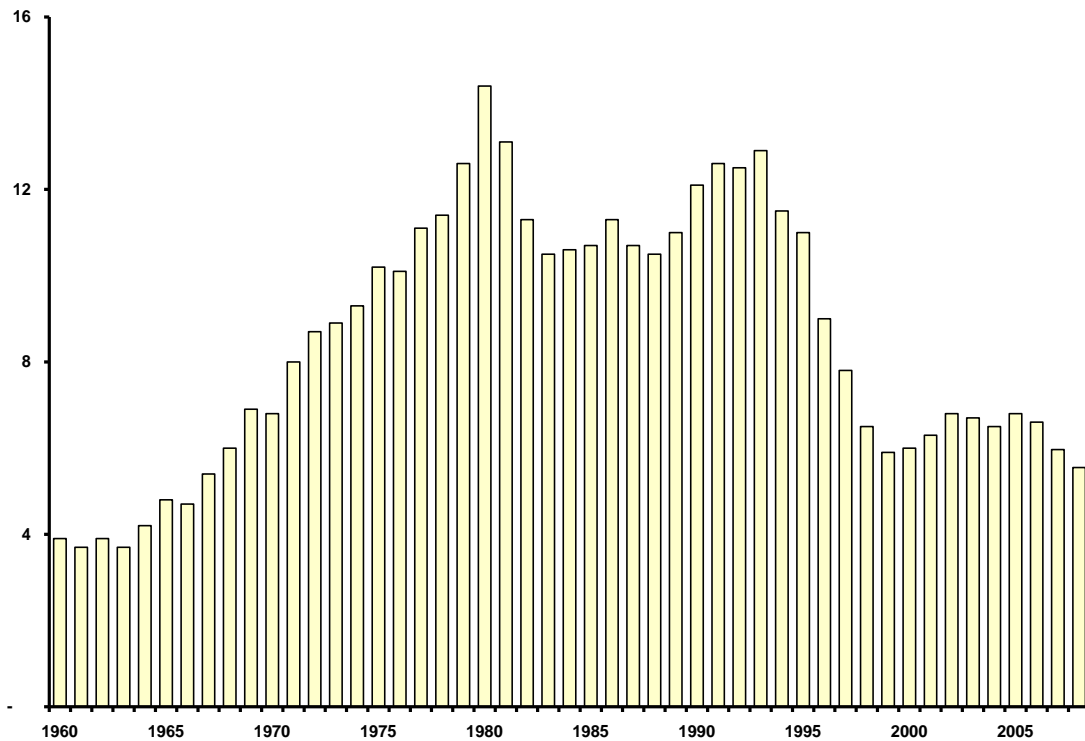
ABSTRACT

This report examines characteristics of homicide victims and changes in certain trends of victimization for the state of California over the twenty-eight-year period of 1981-2008 with special attention to changes over the last seven years, that is, for the period 2002 through 2008. The basic outline of this report follows closely that of our previous one on the same topic, which covered the period 1981-2001¹. Much of the text in the current report is adapted from the earlier one, but some topics have been dropped as no new conclusions can be drawn from the longer data series. Our primary data source is the publicly available Homicide File maintained by the California Department of Justice (Cal-DOJ), Division of Criminal Justice Information Services.

The previous report examined several questions pertaining to the nature of homicide over the period 1981-2001. This report is more focused. Here we are interested primarily in the rise and fall of gang-related homicides. In particular, how such homicides have changed in the last five years and how these changes may have differed from what we might have been led to expect in 2004 when we wrote that report. In addition, we have devoted more attention to changes outside of Los Angeles County. Part II of the report examines statewide changes at the county and jurisdictional level in an effort to better understand the shifting geographic patterns of gang homicide throughout the state. In Part III of the report we present findings from a survey sent to all policing agencies in California regarding the accuracy with which gang homicides are reported to Cal-DOJ. Finally, based upon our analysis, we offer suggestions on how resources might best be allocated in an effort to reduce homicide throughout California.

¹ George Tita and Allan Abrahamse, *Gang Homicide in LA, 1981-2001* California Attorney General's Office, March, 2004.

Figure 1 - Homicides per 100,000 in California, 1960-2008²



OVERVIEW

During the last five decades, as Figure 1 shows, California experienced three “epochs” of increasing homicide rates: a prolonged fifteen-year climb between 1965 and 1980, a five-year period from 1989 through 1993, and a period that began about 1999 and appears to be continuing today.

In our previous report, we focused on the period following the first epoch and characterized the overall patterns in terms of the demographic composition of victims and the motivating circumstances of the incident. In particular, we considered how the most recent, seemingly ongoing epoch compares in terms of demography and circumstances

² Homicide rates for the period 1960-2006 were taken from *Crime in California 2006*. Homicides rates for 2007 and 2008 are estimated by the authors using the same data source.

(especially factors relating to gangs) with the 1989-1993 period of increase. At that time, we suggested that the similarities between the two time periods might suggest that the current upward trend might be relatively short-lived. Fortunately, we were right. After peaking in 2002, homicides have leveled off demonstrating and there is no evidence that California is on the verge of another homicide “epidemic.”

Our second goal is to quantify how changes in the pattern and level of homicide in Los Angeles County compare with similar changes in the remainder of the state. Being the most populated area of the state, some say that Los Angeles County “drives” California’s homicide rate and that gang homicide is largely responsible for changes in the local Los Angeles County rate. We demonstrated support for this point of view, and noted that the changes in levels and patterns of homicide in Los Angeles County could serve as an early indicator of change for the rest of the state. In fact, we found that the increase in homicide, most notably gang homicide, peaked in Los Angeles County in 2002 and then decreased while the number of similar homicides in the rest of the state did not peak until 2004. Similar to the pattern in Los Angeles County, levels of gang homicide also began to subside following the 2004 peak.

Though Los Angeles County continues to drive the state-wide levels of homicide (especially gang homicide), we note that there are important shifts underway. The counties that experienced the largest increases in gang homicide occurred in many of the smaller, less urban counties in the Central Valley and points north.

We originally noted that as goes the city of Los Angeles, so goes the rest of the state. The last decade suggests otherwise. In Los Angeles, the number of gang-related homicides went from 1,143 in the five-year period 1999-2003 to 803 in the second five-year period, 2004-2008, a 30 percent drop. The rest of the state saw 961 gang-related homicides in the first five year period, and 1,043 in the second five years, a 9 percent rise. It remains to be seen whether the Los Angeles drop is a leading indicator for the rest of the state.

Our earlier report concluded with a set of recommendations for how policy makers can best address homicide throughout the state. Little has changed to alter our previous recommendations. Homicide rates have dropped, but homicide still remains the leading cause of death for young minority males, especially African Americans, living in

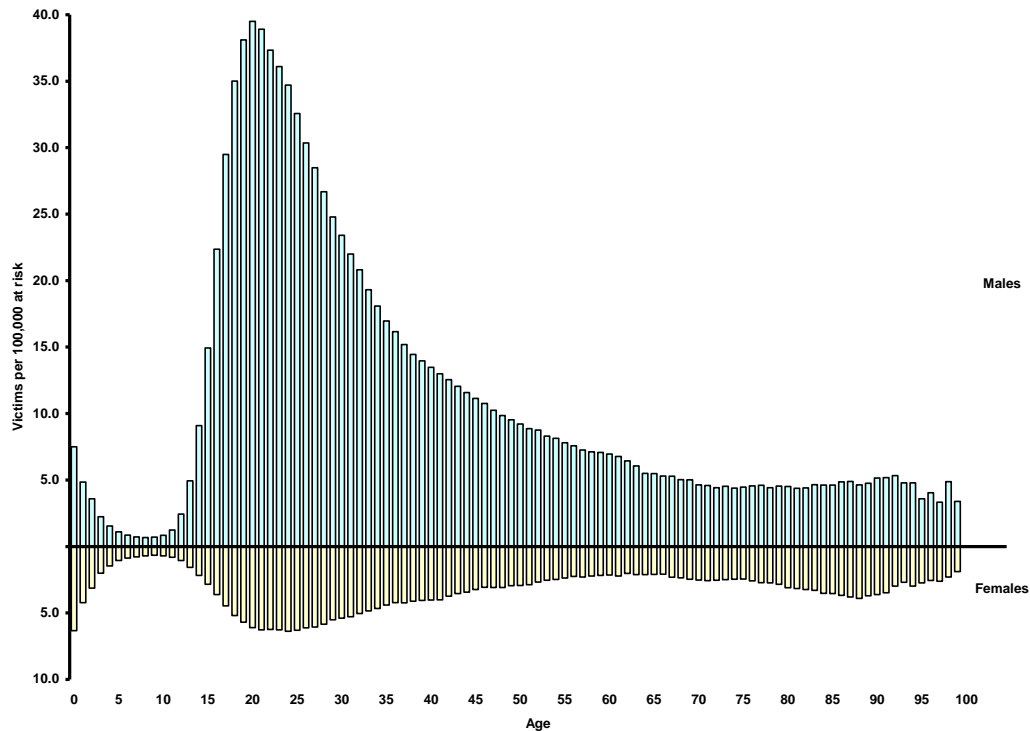
impoverished settings, though apparently not always urban settings. Much of this violence appears to be centered on gang activity within Los Angeles County/City, but it appears to be spreading. As before, we continue to caution against developing and implementing any policy aimed at reducing violence without first looking more closely at the appropriate types of data. The usefulness of a “problem solving approach” is well documented and we adhere to the principle that “more information is better than less information” when formulating policy strategies.

The current report is consistent with our original document and begins with an examination of the trends in both the demography of homicide and the motives. We identify the more recent trends in our charts by using darker colors for the newer data. We have chosen to leave the original text relatively unchanged and then provide new text pertaining to the more recent changes. This is done in order to provide the reader with a perspective of “where we were” six years ago, and whether our hypothesized changes regarding future homicide trends came close to actual patterns.

PART I: RISK OF BECOMING A HOMICIDE VICTIM IN CALIFORNIA, 1981-2008

In this section we replicate the format and discussion points included in our original report and provide a brief summary of the nature of homicide in California over the twenty-eight years between 1981 and 2008. Those interested in more detail on the findings from the earlier years should consult the corresponding section in the original document.

Figure 2 - Homicide rates by age and gender



As Figure 2 shows, the risk of becoming a homicide victim depends strongly on gender and age. However, the relationship between homicide risk and age and gender is complicated. While both sexes face a maximum risk during early adulthood, except for the youngest victims, males always face a higher risk than females. The risk is appallingly high for neonates and relatively low for elementary school kids; it rises rapidly during the teen age years, falls steadily during most of early adulthood and middle age, and then begins to rise again among the elderly. What's going on here?

The answer is: there are different kinds of homicide, and these different kinds pose different risks for men and women, the young, the middle aged and the old. In our previous report, we identified nine distinct types of homicide, listed in Table 1, that differ strongly in the age and gender characteristics of victims. In all but two of these types, most victims are males. The two exceptions are homicides that occur in the course of rape, and spousal or intimate partner homicides. Homicides in which the victim was related to or acquainted with the offender and no gun was involved account for a very large fraction of homicides of children. Homicides that occurred in the course of some

other crime but in which no gun was involved (e.g., strong-arm robbery, burglary) account for many of the homicides of older victims. Fights, arguments, gang killings and other gun-related homicides largely involve males, mostly young ones, and these types of homicides will be considered in more detail below. The last column in Table 1 presents the modal homicide for various demographic groups. That is, if one knows that the victim was a woman, the modal type of homicide was a rape. If the victim was a male between the ages of 10 and 17, the homicide was most likely to be a gang homicide.

Table 1 - Nine homicide types, 1981-2008

Description	Number	Pct male	Average Age of victim	Frequent mode for:
Rape	754	3	35	Women
Killed by relative without gun	2895	56	23	Infants
Spouse, intimate partner	3859	30	42	Women
Fight argument, etc., without gun	5950	71	43	Older adults
Other crime (e.g., robbery) without gun	6324	79	35	Adults over age 65
Killed by acquaintance without gun	7411	73	33	Children
Other crime (e.g., robbery) with gun	11197	90	33	Males
Gang killing	14468	95	23	Males age 10-17
Fight, argument, etc., with gun	25538	85	30	Men, all other ages
All homicides	76267	80	31	

Our main point in showing this table here is this: gang-related homicide is only one of a number of homicide types. It impacts primarily one demographic group (young males). Other homicide types affect other demographic groups. If there is a “solution” to gang homicides, it probably isn’t a solution to other types of homicides.

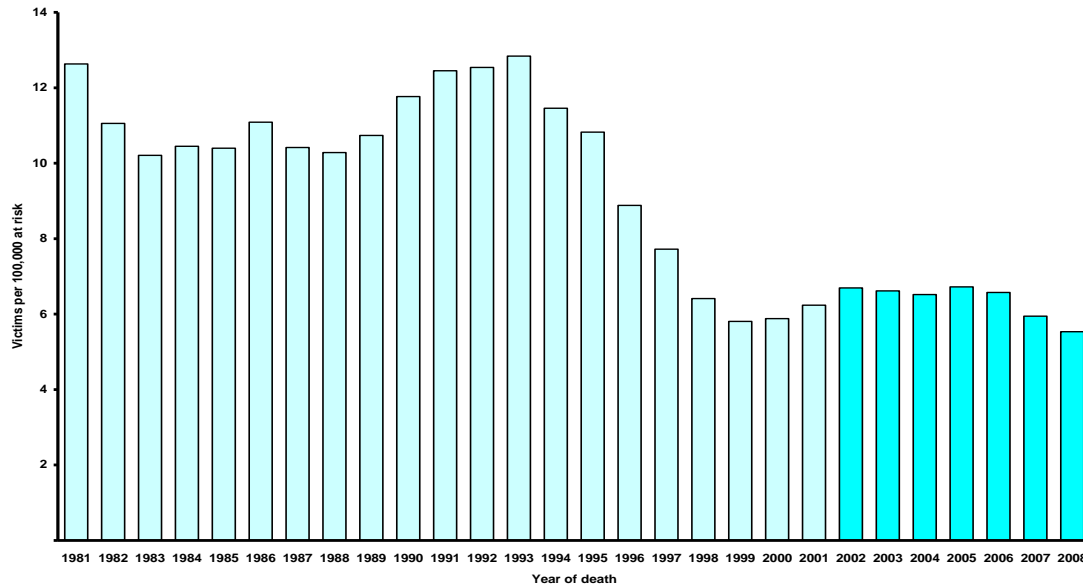
Gang Homicide Trends, 1981-2008

We now turn to an examination of gang homicide trends during the period 1981 through 2008, with special attention to change in the last eight years and how these changes were anticipated, or not anticipated, in our previous report.

As Figure 3 shows, after a decade of relatively high homicide rates in California, they fell every year between 1993 and 1999, and in 1998 reached a level that had not

been seen since the late 1960s. In 2000 we experienced the first increase in six years and an even sharper increase in 2001.

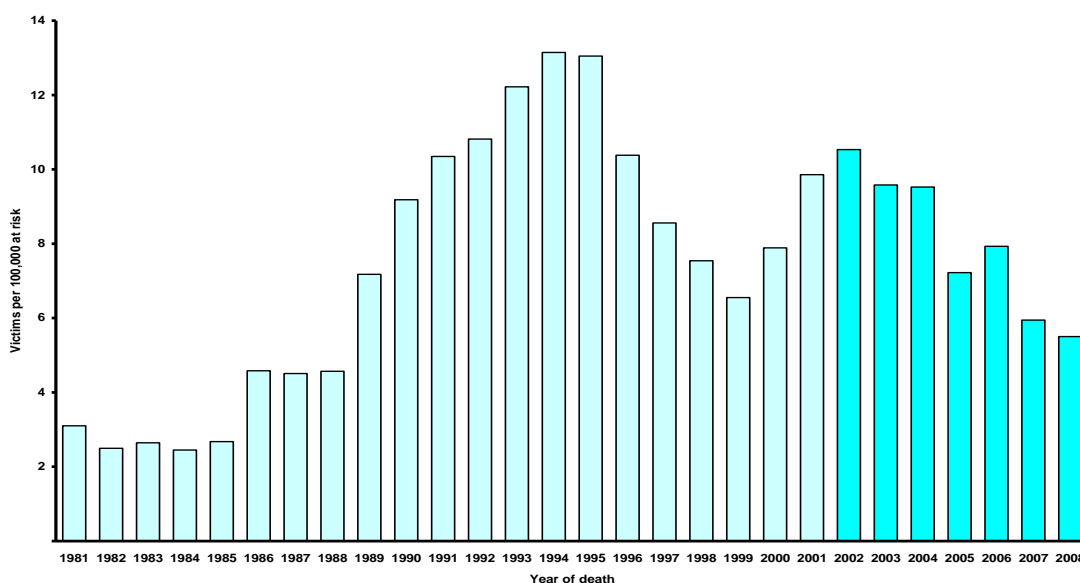
Figure 3 - Homicide victims per 100,000 population, 1981-2008



Fortunately, after peaking in 2002, the trend has stabilized and still remains well below pre-2000 levels.

The trend in gang-related homicides has a similar shape, but the contrasts are much sharper. Figure 4 shows that *changes* in the homicide rate for gang killings of males are more pronounced than are changes in the overall rate. Between 1999 and 2001, the overall rate rose by about 7 percent; gang killings among males age 18-24 rose by almost a factor of two.

Figure 4 - Gang killings of males age 18-24 per 100,000 at risk, 1981-2008

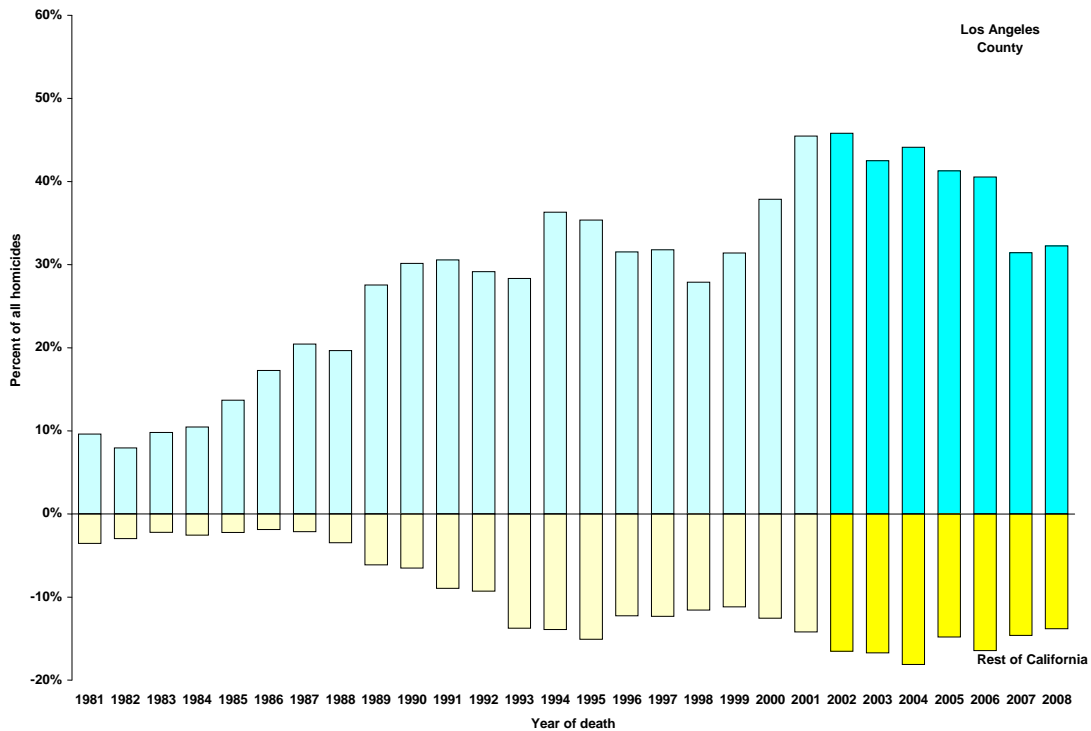


The trend in gang homicide mirrors the overall homicide trend. After peaking in 2002 the rate began to retreat and the rate is now approaching levels not seen since the early 1980s.

Gang-related homicides have always represented a larger fraction of all homicides in Los Angeles County than outside Los Angeles County, and this contrast has grown over the last two decades, and especially in the last few years. Figure 5 illustrates this fact. In 1981, gang killings represented about 10 percent of all Los Angeles homicides, compared to about 4 percent in the rest of the state. In 2001, almost half of all homicides in Los Angeles were gang-related, compared to about 14 percent elsewhere. The updated data show that this has not really changed in the last five years. There is a slight decrease in the proportion of gang homicides in Los Angeles and a slight increase in their contribution to homicide elsewhere.

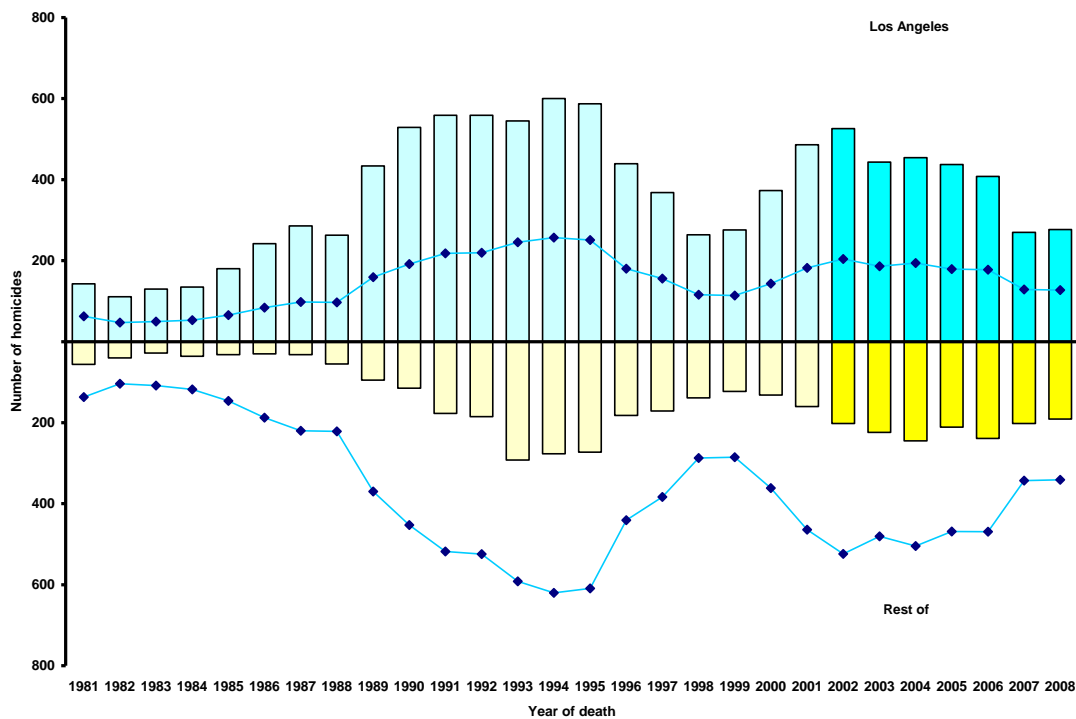
Though areas outside of Los Angeles County may also have a long history with gangs, the violent nature of gangs in Los Angeles is qualitatively different. More importantly, this clearly demonstrates that in order to have a significant impact on violence in Los Angeles County (as well as the rest of California) resources must be dedicated to reducing gang violence.

Figure 5 - Percent of all homicides that are gang killings in Los Angeles County and the rest of California, 1981-2008



In the original report, we noted that the recent rise in gang killings (1998-2001) was much steeper in Los Angeles than in the rest of the state. Furthermore, there were more gang killings in Los Angeles than would be expected on the basis of demography alone. Assuming similar demographic composition of victims, Figure 6 compares the actual number of gang homicides with the number that would have occurred in these two places if the homicides were directly proportional to the population size, controlling for age and race. As the chart shows, across all time periods there are many more gang killings in Los Angeles County than in the rest of the state, than can be accounted for on the basis of differences in the composition of the population between these two places.

Figure 6 - Number of gang killings in Los Angeles County and in the rest of California contrasted with the expected number on the basis of demography, 1981-2008³



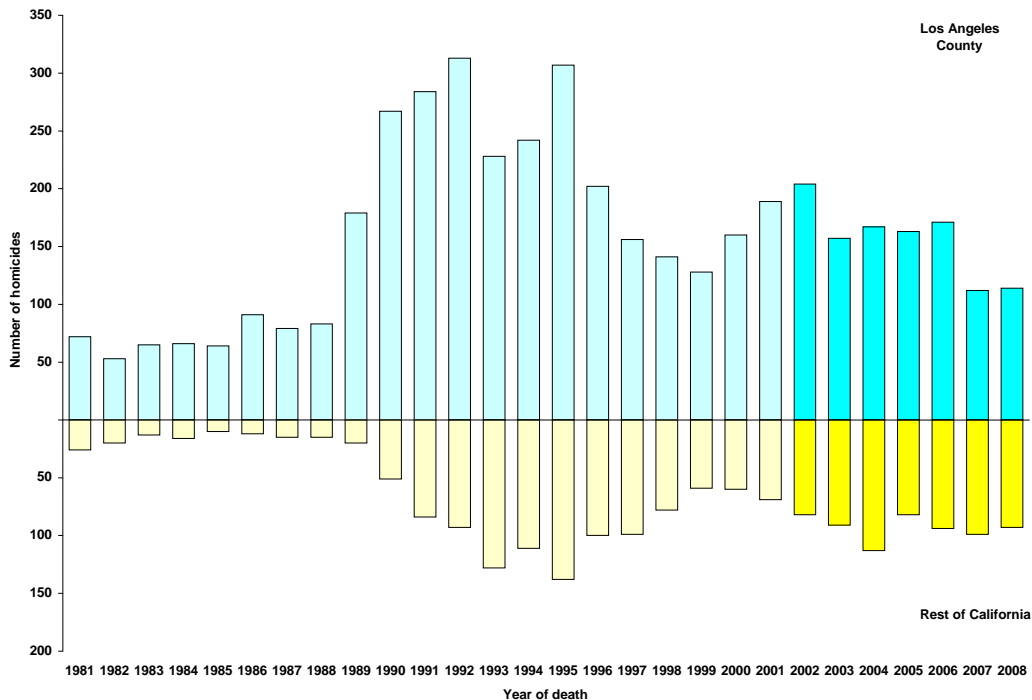
With the exception of the timing of the peak, the trends for gang homicides over the last five years in both Los Angeles County and the rest of the state are similar. Gang homicides peaked in 2002 for Los Angeles County and then began to retreat; the peak outside the county occurred in 2004 and following a large drop in 2005, gang homicide

³ The height of the bars in this figure represents actual counts. The plot points connected by lines represent estimates of the number of homicides that would have been seen if the number of homicides were directly proportional to the population, controlling for age and race. For example, in 2001 there were nine African American homicide victims under the age of 10; five of them in Los Angeles, four in the rest of the state. That year, about 37% of the African Americans in California under the age of 10 lived in Los Angeles County, so if the number of homicides among members of this population group had been proportional to the actual population, three of these homicides (37% of nine) would have occurred in Los Angeles County, the remaining six elsewhere. The first pair of numbers (i.e., five and four) are components of the actual count; the second pair (three and six) are components of the estimated count.

has exhibited a slight decreasing trend. We explore these patterns in greater detail in the second half of our report which addresses the changing landscape of gang homicide.

In addition to disproportionately impacting young males, gang homicide also is concentrated within the African American and Hispanic portions of California's population. California experienced a dramatic increase in gang killings of young Hispanic males in the late 1980s. Figure 7 plots the number of such killings for the twenty-year period in Los Angeles County and outside the county; Table 2 shows the actual number

Figure 7 - Gang killings of Hispanic males age 10-24 in and outside Los Angeles County, 1981-2008



of killings both inside Los Angeles County and in the remainder of the state for the younger and older members of the 10-24 year-old age class.

Within the highlighted years of 1988-1995, we see that for the younger group, the number of such killings nearly tripled between 1988 and 1989 in Los Angeles County. In the remainder of the state we see a four-fold increase from 1988-89 (from 1 to 4 deaths) followed by another four-fold increase from 1989-1990 (from 4 to 16 killings). In

Los Angeles, the number of deaths of 10-17 year olds peaked in 1992 (120) with a secondary peak of 102 deaths in 1995. Since that time, deaths of young Hispanic males involved in gang homicides have fallen dramatically with only 27 such deaths in 2008.

The trend differs outside of the county. The peak occurred in 1995 (49) and does decline, but the sharpest decline occurs in the early years of the current decade (12 homicides in 2000) but then exhibits a secondary peak of 37 deaths in 2004. For the last year with available data (2008), there were 31 deaths within this age group.

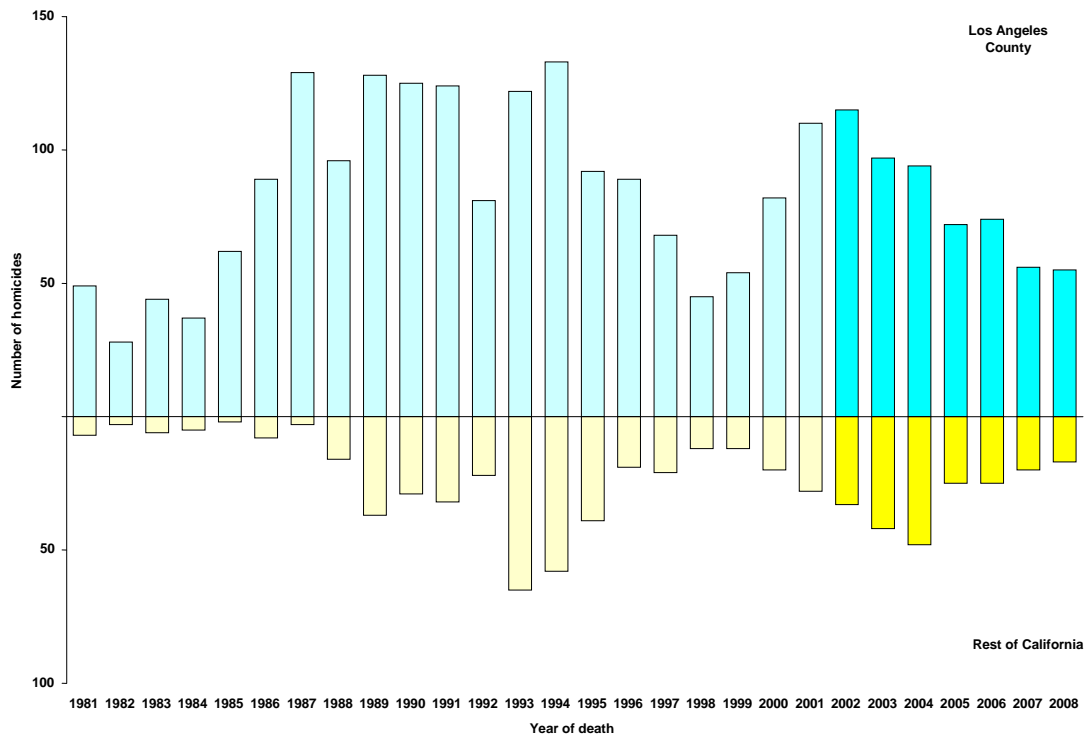
Table 2 also shows a similar pattern of rise and fall for the older age group, though as one might expect, the numbers of events are typically higher for 18-24 year olds. Whereas statewide gang violence claimed the lives of more than 1,900 Hispanic males within the younger group over the period (an average of 69 per year), there were nearly 4,200 victims among the older age group (150 per year). For Los Angeles County the averages are 48 per year among the younger and 105 for the older groups. In the remainder of the state the averages are 20 per year for the younger and 44 for the older group. Though more than halved from the peak of 194 such deaths in 1995, the number of 18-24 year-old Hispanic victims of gang violence in Los Angeles in 2008 was still relatively high at 81. Similarly, for the remainder of the state, the 59 homicides of 18-24 year-olds was below the 1995 peak of 85 such events but current levels remain above the mean.

TABLE 2 -
Gang homicides of young Hispanic males in and out of Los Angeles County,
1981-2008

	Los Angeles County			Rest of state			Total state		
	10-17	18-24	10-24	10-17	18-24	10-24	10-17	18-24	10-24
1981	28	43	71	10	15	25	38	58	96
1982	12	38	50	5	15	20	17	53	70
1983	22	42	64	3	9	12	25	51	76
1984	24	40	64	3	13	16	27	53	80
1985	27	36	63	2	8	10	29	44	73
1986	21	68	89	2	10	12	23	78	101
1987	25	52	77	3	12	15	28	64	92
1988	25	54	79	1	14	15	26	68	94
1989	71	101	172	4	16	20	75	117	192
1990	99	152	251	16	30	46	115	182	297
1991	104	169	273	37	44	81	141	213	354
1992	120	179	299	31	62	93	151	241	392
1993	78	135	213	46	75	121	124	210	334
1994	75	158	233	40	70	110	115	228	343
1995	102	194	296	49	85	134	151	279	430
1996	69	129	198	35	61	96	104	190	294
1997	54	100	154	33	62	95	87	162	249
1998	32	108	140	24	52	76	56	160	216
1999	28	96	124	16	43	59	44	139	183
2000	47	107	154	12	47	59	59	154	213
2001	41	138	179	17	49	66	58	187	245
2002	41	159	200	20	59	79	61	218	279
2003	29	123	152	19	70	89	48	193	241
2004	33	133	166	37	73	110	70	206	276
2005	54	108	162	23	58	81	77	166	243
2006	40	127	167	31	62	93	71	189	260
2007	35	72	107	22	74	96	57	146	203
2008	27	81	108	31	59	90	58	140	198
Total	1,363	2,942	4,305	572	1,247	1,819	1,935	4,189	6,124

Statewide, the overall patterns for African American victims of gang violence are somewhat similar to those of Hispanics, though the increase for African Americans began several years prior to the Hispanic increase and peaked one year earlier in 1994. Figure 8 shows the number of such homicides of African American males age 10-24.

**Figure 8 - Gang killings of African American males age 10-24 in and outside
Los Angeles County, 1981-2008**



In the original report, we noted that after a dramatic decrease of more than 50 percent from the peak in 1994 to the bottom of the trough in 1998, the 2001 number for Los Angeles County was once again at 1994 levels. Fortunately, by 2008, the statewide total of African American victims of gang homicides has retreated to levels immediately preceding the 1998 trough. Between the trough of 1998 and the peak in 2002, the rate of growth for African American victimization far exceeded the rate of growth for Hispanic victims. By comparing the trends in Figures 7 and 8, we find that over the last five years, the rate of decline among victims of gang homicides has been steeper for African Americans than it has been for Hispanics.

SUMMARY

Comparisons of the most recent trends in Los Angeles versus the remainder of the state demonstrate some important racial/ethnic differences. First, the number of Hispanic and African American victims of gang violence in Los Angeles peaked in 2002 and experienced an appreciable drop in 2003. While the number of Hispanic victims has basically remained flat since then, the number of African American victims has continued to decrease. In the remainder of the state, victimization for both groups peaked two years later (2004), and while it is too early to equate the last three years as a “trend,” we do find that the post-peak drop was larger for African Americans. The number of Hispanic victims of gang violence has fallen from 2004 levels, dropping precipitously during the last two years (2007, 2008).

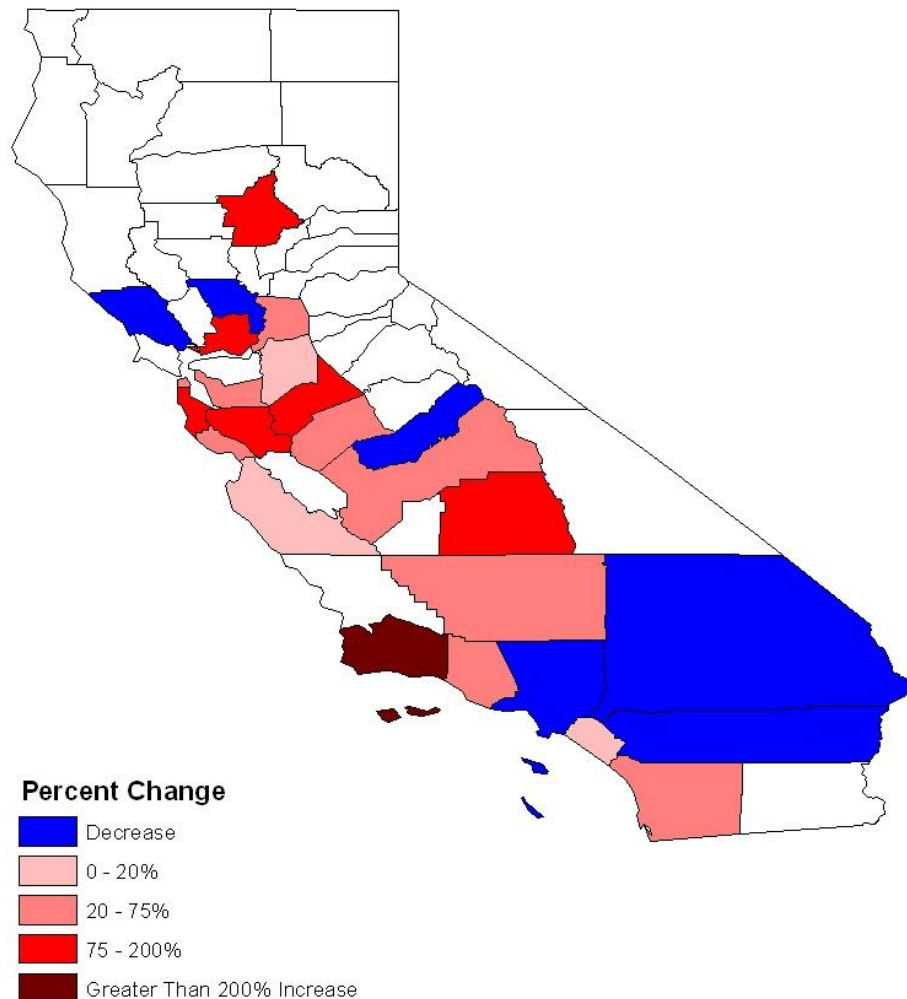
PART II: RECENT CHANGES IN THE PATTERNS OF GANG HOMICIDE

The divergent patterns of gang homicide in terms of geography (within and outside of Los Angeles) and demography noted above are at least suggestive of important geographic shifts in gang violence. Without losing sight of two important facts - that homicide (and violent crime) remain at historically low levels throughout California (and the U.S.) and that Los Angeles still contributes disproportionately to the total number of gang homicides, there does appear to be something “going on” outside of Los Angeles County. To determine if the shift in patterns was confined to specific areas outside of Los Angeles County, we mapped changes in the level of homicide among policing jurisdictions that reported at least five gang homicides in the last ten years (1999-2008).

Figure 9 displays data on the percent change in the aggregate number of gang homicides between the period of 1999-2003 and 2004-2008. Statewide, the total number of gang homicides was amazingly flat with 5,890 incidents during the first half of the decade and 5,868 during the second half of the decade. However, when one examines changes in the levels of gang homicide at the county level, it is clear that a few counties fared better during the 2004-2009 period but that 19 of the 25 counties with at least five gang homicides experienced an increase in the number of gang homicides. Furthermore, while Los Angeles and some surrounding counties experienced a decrease, much of the

increase in gang homicide occurred in San Francisco and counties south and east of the city.

Figure 9
Percentage Change in Gang Homicide
(1999-2003) to (2004-2008)

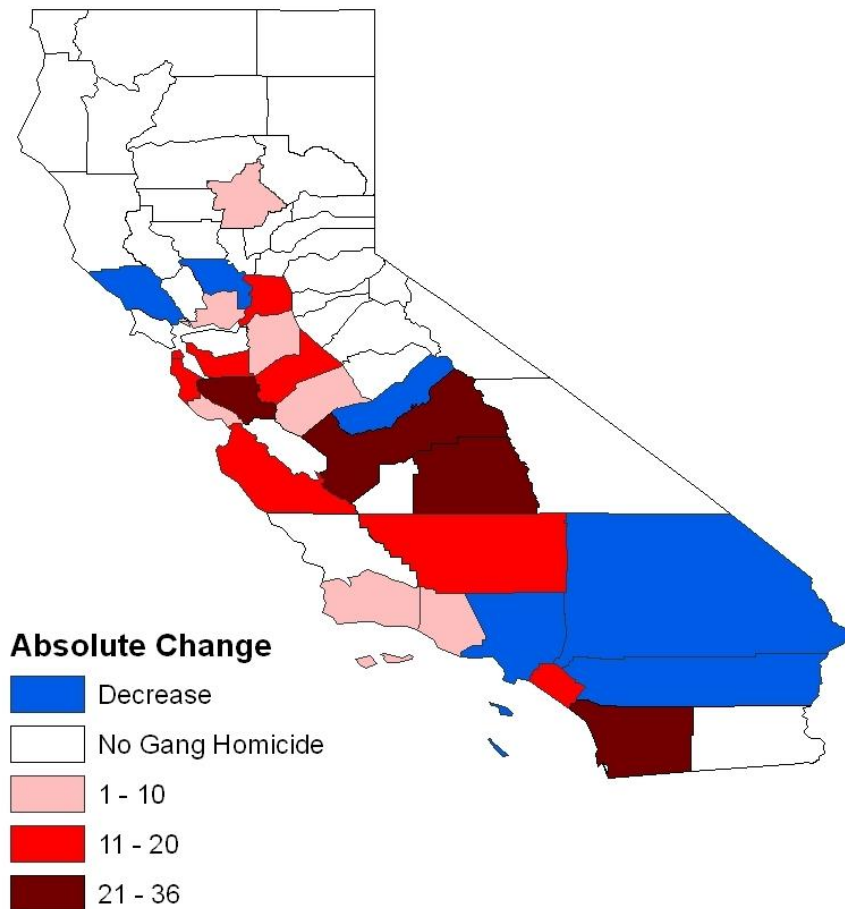


The percentage change in the number of events is sensitive to the total number of events in the first half-decade (1999-2003). For instance, though it is true that

Santa Barbara experienced a 10-fold increase in homicide; this is the result of having only one homicide in the first half-decade and 10 in the second period. Therefore, we also map out the absolute change in all reported gang homicide in Figure 10.

The counties with the largest absolute increase in gang homicide are Santa Clara (n=24), Tulare (n=28), Fresno (n=32) and San Diego (n=36). Much of the increase in the number of gang reported homicides are offset by reductions experienced in Los Angeles (258 fewer) and San Bernardino (17 fewer) Counties.

Figure 10
Absolute Change in Gang Homicide
(1999-2003) to (2004-2008)



Raw numbers and the percent changes are provided in Table 3.

Though the above mapping and analysis of county-level data is certainly helpful in teasing out important changes in the spatial patterns of gang homicide, ideally we would have liked to examine these changes spatially at the level of each jurisdiction. However, this was not possible given our inability to access the GIS boundary maps for all of the policing jurisdictions in the state. What we can do is sort the local police/sheriff departments by county and look for differences in the patterns of reported gang homicide within each county.

Table 3 provides a break down, sorted by county, of the actual and percentage changes in gang homicide over the last decade. Again, we limited our analysis to include only those counties that experienced at least five gang homicides over the period of 1999-2008.

Most striking is that even within counties, there is great variability and shifts in local patterns. For example, in Kern County, Bakersfield experienced a 52 percent decrease in gang homicides (25 to 12) while at the same time both the Kern County Sheriff's Department and the Delano Police Department experienced incredible growth (from 2 to 18 and from 1 to 12, respectively). Again, this is consistent with the notion of gangs and gang homicide "diffusing" out of the larger, more urban areas into smaller, more agricultural areas.

Note too that the within-county variation is not limited to the smaller counties. For instance, in Los Angeles County, the LAPD reported a nearly 30 percent decrease across the two periods while the LASD reported a 22 percent increase in gang homicide. In terms of social organization, history, race, ethnicity, or age, there are no appreciable differences between the gangs in the City of Los Angeles and those in areas policed by the Sheriff's Department or Inglewood (which reported identical numbers in both periods) that would explain this trend. Neither can this disparity be explained by a difference in the social or economic conditions of the local communities. Immigration and changes in the local economy impact the city of Los Angeles in the same way they impact Compton, Inglewood or any other Los Angeles County area. The only variable that differs across all jurisdictions is the police force.

Table 3 -**Total Reported Gang Homicides in California, 1999-2008**

County	Jurisdiction	1999-2003	2004-2008	Percent Change	Absolute Change
Alameda	Alameda SD	0	1	**	1
	Berkeley	0	1	**	1
	Fremont	2	3	50.00	1
	Hayward	10	3	-70.00	-7
	Newark	0	1	**	1
	Oakland	38	53	39.00	15
	San Leandro	0	3	**	3
	Union City	0	2	**	2
	BART	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	50	68	36.00	18
Butte	Butte SD	0	2	**	2
	Chico	0	1	**	1
	Gridley	2	1	-50.00	-1
	Oroville	0	2	**	2
	TOTAL	2	6	200.00	4
Contra Costa	Contra Costa SD	3	8	167.00	5
	Antioch	1	3	200.00	2
	Concord	0	2	**	2
	Pinole	0	5	**	5
	Pittsburg	2	5	150.00	3
	Richmond	36	15	-58.00	-21
	San Pablo	5	5	0.00	0
	TOTAL	47	43	-9.00	-4
Fresno	Fresno SD	4	10	150.00	6
	Fresno	35	56	60.00	21
	Huron	1	1	0.00	0
	Reedley	2	3	50.00	1
	Sanger	0	4	**	4
	Selma	1	1	0.00	0
	TOTAL	43	75	74.00	32
Kern	Kern SD	2	18	800.00	16
	Arvin	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Bakersfield	25	12	-52.00	-13
	Delano	1	12	1100.00	11
	TOTAL	29	42	45.00	13
Kings	Hanford	2	1	-50.00	-1

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	Lemoore	0	1	**	1
	Avenal	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	2	3	50.00	1
Los Angeles	Los Angeles SD	304	371	22.00	67
	Alhambra	2	0	-100.00	-2
	Arcadia	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Artesia	4	4	0.00	0
	Azusa	7	3	-57.14	-4
	Baldwin Park	11	10	-9.09	-1
	Bell	3	6	100.00	3
	Bellflower	6	2	-66.67	-4
	Bell Gardens	8	16	100.00	8
	Burbank	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Claremont	0	1	**	1
	Commerce	7	5	-28.57	-2
	Compton	136	147	8.09	11
	Covina	1	1	0.00	0
	Cudahy	4	14	250.00	10
	Culver City	4	1	-75.00	-3
	Cerritos	1	0	-100.00	-1
	West Hollywood	2	0	-100.00	-2
	Santa Clarita	3	2	-33.33	-1
	Downey	7	5	-28.57	-2
	El Monte	2	7	250.00	5
	Gardena	5	3	-40.00	-2
	Glendale	1	2	100.00	1
	Hawaiian Gardens	8	3	-62.50	-5
	Hawthorne	14	10	-28.57	-4
	Hermosa Beach	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Huntington Park	8	7	-12.50	-1
	Industry	1	3	200.00	2
	Inglewood	52	52	0.00	0
	Lakewood	3	4	33.33	1
	La Mirada	1	0	-100.00	-1
	La Puente	17	12	-29.41	-5
	Lawndale	1	2	100.00	1
	Lomita	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Long Beach	96	88	-8.33	-8
	Los Angeles	1143	803	-29.75	-340
	Lynwood	39	45	15.38	6
	Maywood	13	6	-53.85	-7

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	Monrovia	1	3	200.00	2
	Montebello	7	8	14.29	1
	Monterey Park	3	1	-66.67	-2
	Norwalk	19	14	-26.32	-5
	Palmdale	12	21	75.00	9
	Paramount	20	19	-5.00	-1
	Pasadena	7	11	57.14	4
	Pico Rivera	19	24	26.32	5
	Pomona	22	14	-36.36	-8
	Rosemead	8	7	-12.50	-1
	San Fernando	4	0	-100.00	-4
	San Gabriel	4	2	-50.00	-2
	Santa Fe Springs	2	3	50.00	1
	Santa Monica	2	7	250.00	5
	South El Monte	1	7	600.00	6
	South Gate	8	12	50.00	4
	Temple City	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Torrance	1	0	-100.00	-1
	West Covina	3	5	66.67	2
	Whittier	2	3	50.00	1
	Carson	32	29	-9.38	-3
	La Canada- Flintridge	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Lancaster	7	21	200.00	14
	TOTAL	2104	1846	-12.26	-258
Madera	Madera SD	2	3	50.00	1
	Madera	9	7	-22.22	-2
	TOTAL	11	10	-9.09	-1
Merced	Merced SD	2	8	300.00	6
	Atwater	5	3	-40.00	-2
	Dos Palos	0	1	**	1
	Gustine	0	1	**	1
	Livingston	1	2	100.00	1
	Merced	11	11	0.00	0
	TOTAL	19	26	36.84	7
Monterey	Monterey SD	2	4	100.00	2
	Greenfield	2	1	-50.00	-1
	King City	6	3	-50.00	-3
	Salinas	46	57	23.91	11
	Seaside	0	1	**	1

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	Soledad	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	56	67	19.64	11
Orange	Anaheim	17	14	-17.65	-3
	Buena Park	2	2	0.00	0
	Costa Mesa	0	3	**	3
	Cypress	0	1	**	1
	Fullerton	3	3	0.00	0
	Garden Grove	6	12	100.00	6
	Huntington Beach	5	1	-80.00	-4
	La Habra	3	1	-66.67	-2
	Los Alamitos	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Orange	1	1	0.00	0
	Placentia	3	6	100.00	3
	San Clemente	0	1	**	1
	San Juan Capistrano	1	1	0.00	0
	Santa Ana	41	63	53.66	22
	Stanton	4	1	-75.00	-3
	Westminster	8	1	-87.50	-7
	Irvine	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Laguna Hills	0	1	**	1
	Unknown	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	96	113	17.71	17
Riverside	Riverside SD	9	11	22.22	2
	Banning	2	2	0.00	0
	Coachella	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Desert Hot Springs	0	4	**	4
	Hemet	1	1	0.00	0
	Indio	3	2	-33.33	-1
	Norco	3	1	-66.67	-2
	Palm Springs	1	3	200.00	2
	Perris	0	1	**	1
	Riverside	26	18	-30.77	-8
	Corona	3	1	-66.67	-2
	Cathedral City	1	4	300.00	3
	Lake Elsinore	3	2	-33.33	-1
	La Quinta	2	1	-50.00	-1
	Moreno Valley	1	3	200.00	2
	TOTAL	56	54	-3.57	-2
Sacramento	Sacramento SD	10	22	120.00	12
	Sacramento	30	32	6.67	2

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	TOTAL	40	54	35.00	14
San Bernardino	San Bernardino SD	16	4	-75.00	-12
	Chino	2	1	-50.00	-1
	Colton	6	3	-50.00	-3
	Fontana	13	8	-38.46	-5
	Montclair	1	5	400.00	4
	Ontario	10	15	50.00	5
	Redlands	1	1	0.00	0
	Rialto	15	14	-6.67	-1
	San Bernardino	52	38	-26.92	-14
	Upland	1	3	200.00	2
	Victorville	3	2	-33.33	-1
	Adelanto	2	1	-50.00	-1
	Rancho Cucamonga	2	2	0.00	0
	Highland	1	5	400.00	4
	Twentynine Palms	0	1	**	1
	Hesperia	0	2	**	2
	Apple Valley	1	1	0.00	0
	Chino Hills	0	3	**	3
	TOTAL	126	109	-13.00	-17
San Diego	San Diego SD	1	3	200.00	2
	Carlsbad	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Chula Vista	0	1	**	1
	El Cajon	0	4	**	4
	Escondido	3	2	-33.00	-1
	Imperial Beach	0	2	**	2
	La Mesa	0	1	**	1
	National City	10	7	-30.00	-3
	Oceanside	2	5	150.00	3
	San Diego	39	64	64.00	25
	San Marcos	0	3	**	3
	Vista	2	0	-100.00	-2
	Lemon Grove	1	2	100.00	1
	Solano Beach	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	59	95	61.00	36
San Francisco	San Francisco	39	55	41.00	16
	TOTAL	39	55	41.00	16
San Joaquin	San Joaquin SD	3	0	-100.00	-3
	Lodi	1	1	0.00	0

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	Manteca	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Stockton	34	39	14.71	5
	TOTAL	39	40	2.56	1
San Mateo	San Mateo SD	2	3	50.00	1
	Daly City	2	2	0.00	0
	Half Moon Bay	0	1	**	1
	Redwood City	0	4	**	4
	San Mateo	0	1	**	1
	East Palo Alto	1	6	500.00	5
	TOTAL	5	17	240.00	12
Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara SD	0	1	**	1
	Guadalupe	0	1	**	1
	Lompoc	0	1	**	1
	Santa Barbara	1	3	200.00	2
	Santa Maria	0	4	**	4
	TOTAL	1	10	900.00	9
Santa Clara	Santa Clara SD	2	0	-100.00	-2
	Campbell	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Cupertino	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Morgan Hill	0	1	**	1
	Mountain View	1	2	100.00	1
	San Jose	21	50	138.10	29
	Sunnyvale	3	0	-100.00	-3
	TOTAL	29	53	82.76	24
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz SD	0	1	**	1
	Santa Cruz	1	3	200.00	2
	Watsonville	3	3	0.00	0
	TOTAL	4	7	75.00	3
Solano	Solano SD	0	1	**	1
	Fairfield	2	6	200.00	4
	Suisun	1	1	0.00	0
	Vacaville	0	1	**	1
	Vallejo	1	2	100.00	1
	TOTAL	4	11	175.00	7
Sonoma	Sonoma SD	0	2	**	2
	Cloverdale	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Rohnert Park	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Santa Rosa	6	6	0.00	0
	Petaluma	1	0	-100.00	-1

<i>County</i>	<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>1999-2003</i>	<i>2004-2008</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
	TOTAL	9	8	-11.00	-1
Stanislaus	Stanislaus SD	7	13	86.00	6
	Ceres	0	1	**	1
	Modesto	4	13	225.00	9
	Newman	0	1	**	1
	Patterson	0	2	**	2
	Turlock	0	1	**	1
	TOTAL	11	31	182.00	20
Tulare	Tulare SD	5	16	220.00	11
	Dinuba	0	2	**	2
	Exeter	0	1	**	1
	Lindsay	2	0	-100.00	-2
	Porterville	0	7	**	7
	Tulare	2	7	250.00	5
	Visalia	10	15	50.00	5
	Woodlake	1	0	-100.00	-1
	TOTAL	20	48	140.00	28
Ventura	Ventura SD	1	6	500.00	5
	Camarillo	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Fillmore	0	2	**	2
	Oxnard	16	13	-19.00	-3
	Port Hueneme	0	4	**	4
	Santa Paula	0	1	**	1
	Thousand Oaks	1	0	-100.00	-1
	Ventura	4	2	-50.00	-2
	Simi Valley	1	1	0.00	0
	TOTAL	24	29	21.00	5
Yolo	Woodland	4	0	100.00	-4
	West Sacramento	3	1	-67.00	-2
	TOTAL	7	1	-86.00	-6
Total Gang Homicide		5868	5846	0.03	-22

** Indicates that there were no homicides in the first half of the decade.

PART III: A NOTE OF CAUTION - ARE THE NUMBERS OF GANG HOMICIDE “CORRECT”?

There are active debates within the criminology and criminal justice literatures regarding both the definition of “gang” and the measurement of crimes that involve gangs. For our purposes, the definition of what constitutes a gang is not of great significance providing that the local agencies have not drastically changed their definition of who is, and who is not, a gang member. However, it is important that we have some confidence in what types of events local police agencies label as a “gang homicide.” In Chicago, for instance, a homicide is labeled a “gang homicide” if and only if the crime was truly motivated by the gang involvement of at least one of the participants. In contrast to Chicago is the Los Angeles Police Department, which labels most homicides involving a known gang member as a “gang homicide” regardless of the motivation for the crime. Though there may be little motivation for changing the definition of gang membership, some have argued that the local political (and national funding) climate has provided some incentive to either over- or under-count the “true” number of gang homicides (see Maxson and Klein 1996⁴).

The authors also acknowledge that following the public release of our last report we were contacted by representatives from several police/sheriff agencies throughout the state who informed us that our local analysis was “wrong.” The callers all argued that while their agency carefully reported all of their gang homicides to Cal-DOJ annually, other local jurisdictions appeared to be under-reporting their numbers for gang homicide. At no point did any of the callers suggest that the under-reporting of gang homicides by other jurisdiction was intentional, just that it was occurring.

Under responsibilities set forth by AB 1381, the Governor’s Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy (OGYVP) initiated a survey of all police and sheriff’s departments within the state to determine the extent to which under-reporting of gang homicide was occurring.

The respondents were asked to enumerate the number of total homicides and gang homicides in their jurisdiction for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007. According to the

⁴ Maxson, C.L. and M.W. Klein. 1996. “Defining gang Homicide: An Updated Look at Member and Motive Approaches” (pp. 3 - 20) in Gangs in America (2nd) by C. Ronald Huff (Ed). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

report issued by OGYVP in April 2009, 178 police departments (53 percent response rate) and 24 sheriff's departments (41 percent response rate) completed the survey. It is not possible to completely assess whether any systematic bias exists between those agencies that chose to complete the survey and those that did not. However, the responses do appear to be randomly distributed across both large and small departments and even more encouraging is the fact that many jurisdictions that "under-reported" the number of gang homicides to Cal-DOJ did indeed complete a survey. One might have expected it would be precisely those departments in which there were significant discrepancies that would choose not to return the survey. That said, we still do not know how representative the final sample of respondents is.

The results of the survey are striking with 60 of the police departments and 11 of the sheriff's departments reporting more gang homicide in the survey than they did to Cal-DOJ. For the period of 2005- 2007, these same agencies reported a total of 1,535 gang homicides to Cal-DOJ. However, on the survey, the number of gang homicides is now reported to be 2,539, or 1,004 more homicides than originally reported. It is important to note that this discrepancy only occurred in terms of "gang homicide" and that the **total numbers** of homicides reported to Cal-DOJ and again on the survey were very nearly identical. This begs two important questions: 1) How does such under-reporting occur, and 2) What implications does this have for the analysis presented above.

First, to answer the "how" question, we again rely on data that was volunteered by 54 of the respondents to the OGYVP survey regarding their assessment as to why this was happening. Again, the reasons are rather benign. Departments believed that Cal-DOJ had a very restrictive definition of "gang," which they do not. Others were unaware that if the circumstances were "unknown" at the time of the reporting that they could indeed later notify Cal-DOJ and change the motive to "gang." Others simply reported internal issues regarding the acquisition and reporting of circumstances for any of the homicides. Given the admittedly large discrepancy in the reporting of gang homicide to Cal-DOJ, one might wonder if these differences might nullify our findings and conclusions. Given that there is no evidence to suggest that there is systematic bias in the under-reporting of gang homicide in terms of either the size of the department or the level of urbanization in

a county, we believe that our results are robust. For examples, our analysis of the data collected by OGYVP shows that primarily urban Orange County under-reported the number of gang homicides by 20, while less urban San Joaquin County also under-reported by 22 gang homicides. Not surprisingly, counties with the very largest population also tended to have the highest absolute level of under-reporting but the percentage by which the under-reporting occurred is not unlike the rate of under-reporting in smaller population centers.

Our analysis is primarily interested in reporting trends in homicide, especially gang homicide, and not the magnitude or total number of events for any given year. So long as the rate of under-reporting has remained relatively steady over time, then the overall trends will look similar. While there is some evidence that the overall level of under-reporting has increased from 2005 to 2007, it appears that much of the under-reporting is confined to just a couple of large police departments. Again, this should not impact the overall story regarding the changing levels and geographic patterns of gang homicide in California.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2004, we offered the following observations about the period 1981 through 2001.

1. A sharp decline in homicides that began about 1993 appears to have reversed itself, and homicide rates are now increasing.
2. Much, if not most, of this increase can be attributed to gang killings. Other kinds of homicides continue to decline.
3. Los Angeles County appears to experience more gang killings than the rest of the state, even after controlling for ethnic, racial and age differences. For other kinds of homicide, Los Angeles' experience is similar to the rest of the state.
4. In the beginning, an increase in gang killings may affect only a small area (e.g., Southeast Los Angeles) and may involve only one demographic class (e.g., very young Hispanic males). But such violence may soon spread to other areas and groups.

5. If an increase in gang killings is seen in Los Angeles, an increase may be seen very soon elsewhere in other parts of the state. There is, however, probably no reason to assume that problems *always* begin in Los Angeles.

In light of the present analysis, which takes into account another five years of experience, we can add the following:

- In the last five years, while gang killings have been fairly constant from year to year, or declining slightly in Los Angeles, there is clear evidence of a rise in smaller places outside the main urban ones.
- Los Angeles does appear to serve as an “early warning” agent with respect to upturns in gang violence. Gang violence began to increase (and peak) earlier in Los Angeles than in the remainder of California.
- Even within a specific county, there can be great variation in gang homicide patterns.

We offered several policy recommendations, all of which we still support:

1. First of all, “do no harm.” Significant decreases in some kinds of homicide have been seen in the last twenty years, and are continuing, and despite the recent rise in gang killings, the rate of such killings is much lower than it was a decade ago. We need to learn what has worked, and why, then reinforce these processes, and do nothing to disrupt them.
2. Tailor specific interventions to specific problems, in specific places. The immediate problem appears to have begun with African-American gangs in Los Angeles County. We need to deal with that problem, locally, and then guard against the problem spreading to other areas.
3. As we originally noted, the data suggest that problems that begin in one place may spread to another. Therefore, the state should implement a homicide surveillance system, similar to systems used by the public health community, to provide an early warning of a rise in homicide within particular communities. The system needs to work fast enough to provide a warning within a few months of

- the beginning of the problem. It also needs to be fine grained with respect to geography and demography. It does not need to wait until a homicide is “solved,” nor does it have to be highly concerned with details or even perfect accuracy. A system that could capture and publish a modest amount of information (age, race, sex, circumstance, and census tract) about almost every suspected homicide victim (two or three thousand a year) within a month of the event would provide an important tool for detecting and reacting to upswings in violence in the state.
4. We applaud the current efforts of the state to examine the issue of data quality, including convening police and sheriff’s departments, as well as Cal-DOJ, to discuss ways to improve the accurate reporting of circumstance for all types of homicide.

We would like to conclude with the following general observation. Homicide is not a uni-dimensional crime. The circumstances that surround each event are difficult to capture within a single category or label. Therefore, it is incorrect to think about “A Homicide Problem.” Even labeling something as a “gang” homicide masks important aspects that need to be understood before enacting policy; for example, whether the homicide was motivated by gang rivalry, or the protection of drug markets, or was merely an argument that involved young males who happened to be gang members.